

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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----- 042922

R 241630Z MAY 74

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2654

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0376

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI AO

SUBJECT: FORTRESS CABINDA

1. DURING RECENT VISIT TO CABINDA, CONGEN OFFICER WAS STARTLED BY
SIZE OF MILITARY FORCES IN ENCLAVE:

ARMY 5000 MEN. ROAD FROM IEMA (ON SOUTHERN BORDER WITH ZAIRE)
FLANKED BY FRESHLY DUG BATTALION SIZE DEFENSIVE POSITION,
INCLUDING ANTI-TANK DEFENSES. IN NEARBY CAMP OFFICER SAW APPROX.
50 PORTABLE BARBED WIRE BARRIERS THAT COULD BE QUICKLY MOVED TO
IMPEDE TRAFFIC ON THE ROAD OR COVER THE DEFENSIVE POSITION.
PORTUGUESE ARTILLERY BATTERY IS REPORTEDLY ZEROED IN ON THIS
LOCATION.

NAVY: A FRIGATE AND SEVERAL GUNBOATS WERE SEEN. THEY CONSTANTLY
PATROL OFF-SHORE RIGS. AT NIGHT MARINES IN RUBBER RAFTS CRISS-
CROSS AREA. ARMY HAS PLAN TO USE FRIGATE'S GUNS AS MOBILE
ARTILLERY.

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AIR FORCE: 3 B-26'S, 2 PV-2'S, 2 ALLOUETTES III AND A DO-27 WERE

SEEN. (NORMAL COMPLEMENT IS ONE ALLOUETTE III.) EXTENSIVE ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS WERE ALSO NOTED AT CABINDA AIRPORT. OVERFLIGHTS OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES CONTINUING; B-26'S REPORTEDLY USED FOR BOMBING (WITHIN CABINDA).

2. ARMY WAS AND IS STILL CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF OFFENSIVE MILITARY ACTION BY ZAIRE. ARMY SOURCE TOLD CONGEN OFFICER ZAIRIAN ARMY HAS 5000 MEN, WITH A FEW ARMORED CARS, ARMED PERSONNEL CARRIERS AND LIGHT TANKS AT BASE AT QUITONO, ABOUT 20 KN, FROM IEMA. AS PORTUGUESE HAVE ALMOST NO AMMO IN CABINDA THEY CONCERNED ABOUT THREAT OF INVASION BY MOBUTU'S FORCES ACROSS BROAD COASTAL PLAIN THAT STRETCHES FROM SOUTHERN FRONTIER INTO CABINDA CITY. THERE ARE NO NATURAL OBSTACLES TO PREVENT INCURSION. WITH FORCES NOW AT HAND, HOWEVER, PORTUGUESE ARMY CONFIDENT IT CAN REPEL ANYTHING MOBUTU THROWS AT THEM.

4. MOST PORTUGUESE TROOPS IN CABINDA STILL GARRISONED IN NORTHERN SECTOR TO PROTECT AGAINST MPLA TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, BUT ARE TOTALLY ROAD MOBILE AND COULD QUICKLY BE MOVED TO SOUTH ON PAVED HIGHWAY THAT RUNS LENGTH OF DISTRICT.

5. ARMY AND GULF OIL CO. SOURCES ARE CONFIDENT THAT SECURITY OF GULF'S ON-SHORE AND OFF-SHORE INSTALLATION ADEQUATE TO THREAT, ALTHOUGH GULF OFFICIAL EXPRESSED SOME TREPIDATION ABOUT RESULTS WHICH SMALL WELL-TRAINED GROUP COULD ACHIEVE. (COMMENT: APPREHENSION SHARED BY CONGEN OFFICER.)

6. FNLA DISREGARDED BY PORTUGUESE AS CURRENT THREAT TO CABINDA.

7. COMMENT: PORTUGUESE FORCES IN CABINDA MORE THAN ADEQUATE COPE WITH ANY ZAIRIAN THREAT AND EASILY ABLE CONTAIN ANY SIZEABLE MPLA INCURSION TO BORDER REGION. BUT, AS PALESTINIAN GROUPS REGULARLY DEMONSTRATE, A SMALL, DEDICATED AND WELL-TRAINED SUICIDE GROUP CAN INFILTRATE THROUGH BEST DEFENSES. WHILE WE WOULD NOT RATE IT AS LIKELY THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY THAT THIS, OR ATTACK ON OIL DEPOT WITH 122MM ROCKETS (WHICH MPLA NOW POSSESSES) MIGHT OCCUR IF AGOSTINHO NETO DECIDES DRAMATIC GESTURE IS CALLED FOR IN CONTEXT PRESENT ANGOLAN POLITICAL SITUATION.
BRIGGS

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